

VZCZCXRO1357  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHPG #0340/01 1681447  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 171447Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1479  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0114  
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA PRIORITY 0066  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1972

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000340

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [EZ](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN DEPLOYMENTS PROPOSAL PASSES CZECH LOWER  
HOUSE

REF: A. 08 PRAGUE 792

[1](#)B. 08 PRAGUE 779

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On June 16, the Czech parliament's lower house approved a 2010 troop deployment proposal that, among other deployments, includes 535 Czech troops for Afghanistan. Senate approval should follow. This smooth approval is a stark contrast to the contentiousness of the 2009 deployment proposal. However, the March fall of the Topolanek government removed the bitter personal feud between him and Social Democrat Party (CSSD) leader Paroubek that had colored the last year's proposal, and unlike last year, the Defense Ministry engaged all parties early on and made concessions in numbers. Swift approval of the proposal is a remarkable achievement for PM Jan Fischer's interim government, but there are no guarantees future deployment proposals will be approved so smoothly. End Summary.

Wide Support, Despite CSSD Rumblings

[1](#)2. (SBU) On June 16, the Czech Chamber of Deputies (lower house of parliament) passed the 2010 foreign deployments proposal by a vote of 122 out of the 173 deputies present. The proposal, which the interim technocratic cabinet of PM Jan Fischer approved on June 8, was approved by the Defense Committee of the lower house on June 9. All the Civic Democratic (ODS), Green and Christian Democratic deputies present voted for the proposal; all of the unreformed Communists (KSCM) MPs present voted against it.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In 2009, CSSD opposition almost derailed the deployment proposal (refs A and B). This time, despite rumblings by some CSSD deputies that the number of troops serving abroad was too high, the proposal garnered wide support among CSSD MPs, with 35 voting for it, including Foreign Affairs Committee chair Jan Hamacek, and Defense Committee deputy chairs Miroslav Svoboda and Antonin Seda. CSSD head Jiri Paroubek and CSSD shadow Foreign Minister were absent.

[1](#)4. (U) Unlike a normal bill, this proposal does not require a first and second reading, merely a single vote. The next step is Senate approval. The ODS-dominated Senate is likely to easily pass the deployments proposal. The deployments approved for 2010 were 535 soldiers in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and a 550-soldier KFOR peace keeping mission in Kosovo. The proposal did not include a special forces contingent, since the Czech special forces are finishing their current 18-current deployment and will not be available for deployment in 2010. The foreign deployments also include: 2 troops in Bosnia (EU Operation); 5 troops in Chad and the Central African Republic

(UN-MINURCAT); 3 troops in Sinai (MFO); 3 troops in Britain (EU NAVFOR ATALANTA); 220 troops in the first-half of 2010 and then 360 troops in the second-half of 2010 in NATO missions (NATO Response Force).

#### A Contrast to the 2009 Proposal

-----

¶5. (C) Although foreign deployment proposals are not usually contentious and garner bipartisan support, last year's deployment bill did not enjoy a smooth ride. In a populist move, Jiri Paroubek and CSSD based their negative stance on calculations of domestic personal political advantage, using the 2009 deployments proposal to gain concessions on health care fees and to hammer ODS leader and former Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek. This caused the bill to languish in the lower house late into December and delayed its passage until February 2009.

¶6. (C) The fall of former PM Topolanek's ODS government helped assure the proposal's passage. According to CSSD deputy Defense Committee chair Svoboda, with the bitter Topolanek-Paroubek personality feud out of the way, ODS and CSSD quickly agreed to remove deployments from their political disputes and to honor Czech obligations to international security. Prague Security Studies Institute Director Jiri Schneider also credited passage to the Topolanek government's fall and departure from the scene.

¶7. (C) In addition, the Ministry of Defense also got out early this year and engaged all the parties to ensure smooth

PRAGUE 00000340 002 OF 002

passage. In a concession to CSSD, MOD's proposal this year included a slight reduction of forces that were better concentrated in certain areas and focused on reconstruction and training, issues that were important to some MPs.

#### A Swift Approval, But No Guarantee for the Future

-----

¶8. (C) Comment: The ODS-CSSD consensus, and approval before October parliamentary elections, were remarkable. The Fischer government is a caretaker government that as a rule is seeking to postpone divisive issues until after October parliamentary elections, even though Fischer stated that one of its goals was approval of the deployment proposal.

¶9. (C) Comment (continued): That removal of the Topolanek-Paroubek feud eased passage is a testament to the degree to which personality spats have poisoned Czech politics -- and to what unpoisoned Czech politics might look like. There is no guarantee that future deployment proposals will be this smooth. CSSD leader Paroubek, whose party may well win in October, showed with the 2009 proposal that he is willing to use deployments for domestic political gain. While he may feel more constrained against doing so if he is PM, Paroubek and his CSSD remain uncertain supporters of future deployments. End Comment.  
Thompson-Jones